



# Application Guidelines

## About the Program

The National Park Service (NPS) manages some of our nation's most historic sites, scenic resources, and critical natural areas. The NPS also provides assistance to communities to conserve their local natural resources and develop new close-to-home outdoor recreation opportunities through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program. RTCA staff work in urban, rural, and suburban communities to help applicants to conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. RTCA staff help on a variety of natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation projects including multi-use trails, single-purpose trails, greenways, water trails/blueways, river corridor conservation, land protection, and park planning.

RTCA Program staff help with partnership-building to achieve community-set goals, organizational development, assessing resources, developing concept plans, public education and participation, and identifying potential sources of funding. RTCA can assist with identification of public and private funding sources but does not provide direct grants. Project partners may be federal agencies, state or local agencies, tribes, non-profit organizations, or citizens' groups. RTCA assistance is for one year and may be renewed for a second year if warranted.

RTCA's strategic plan directs our program, for the next four years, to provide more assistance on projects that create networks of trails, parks, rivers, greenways and open spaces, as well as projects that help NPS areas with gateway and adjacent natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation issues.

For further information about RTCA and the work we are doing around the country with nearly 300 community partners, please visit our national web site at <http://www.nps.gov/rtca>.



## Project Selection Criteria

Applications for RTCA Program assistance are competitively evaluated by our regional offices, based on how well the applications meet the following criteria:

1. Initial project partners are identified and a lead project partner is designated. Note: *The lead partner may be a federal agency, state or local agency, tribe, non-profit organization, or citizens' group. Federal agencies, including the National Park Service, may be the lead partner only in collaboration with a nonfederal partner.*
2. Project has specific, partner- defined goals and anticipated measurable results that are: clearly stated; support the [National Park Service mission](#) and [RTCA mission and strategic plan goals](#); protect important natural resources or enhance outdoor recreation opportunities; and will have results that occur within an appropriate timeframe.
3. There is a commitment by lead project partners to significant public involvement and outreach in the project.
4. Roles and contributions of initial project partners, including RTCA, are identified. There is a commitment by initial project

partners to cooperate and to provide or obtain the resources necessary to implement the project.

5. There is evidence of broad support for the project.

**Preference** is given to a project that also:

- a. provides physical connections among resources;
- b. includes an NPS area as an actively involved project partner;
- c. includes both natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation;
- d. [partners with a health organization](#).

Consultation with an RTCA staff before an application for assistance is made helps clarify RTCA roles and contributions and also helps identify how the selection criteria might apply to your conservation and outdoor recreation goals. **Application letters are due August 1, 2006.**

Projects are locally- requested and led and should include significant public involvement and outreach. Projects should also include the commitment, cooperation and cost- sharing of all partners. Assistance is for one year and may be renewed for a second year if warranted. The RTCA involvement in these partnerships requires all partners to monitor progress and measure success during and after completion of the project.

# How to Apply for RTCA Program Assistance

Application Letters (one to three pages) are due **August 1, 2006** and should contain the following:

## 1. Contact Information:

Please provide information about the initial project partner(s), including name of a primary contact, organization, address, phone, fax, and e-mail. Designate a lead project partner.

## 2. Project Description and Anticipated Results:

- Provide the name of the project and project location.
- Identify what populations in your community will be served by the project.
- Describe briefly the anticipated results of the project and why the project is important.
- Identify anticipated on- the- ground results: For example resources created, conserved, enhanced or made available to the public – the number of river miles improved by restoration projects; the number of river miles conserved with enhanced protection status; the number of multi- use trail miles created; the number of acres of parkland created; the number of acres of wildlife habitat restored.
- Describe the related important natural, cultural, historic, scenic, and recreational resources within the project area.
- Describe other expected accomplishments: For example an increased community commitment to stewardship, a new conservation organization, or the development of a concept plan for a trail.

- Outline the background or prior activity on the project (if any), the current status, and a proposed schedule for completion.

## 3. Commitment for Public Involvement:

Describe the type and level of public involvement you anticipate during the development of this project.

## 4. Roles, Resources, and Contributions:

- Describe the kind of technical assistance or role you are seeking from the RTCA program.
- Describe the roles and contributions of all project partners listed in part 1 above.
- Identify other types of resources available for the implementation of your project.

## 5. Support for the Project

- Describe the support you anticipate from interested stakeholders, such as public agencies, nonprofit organizations, and landowners.
- Support letters from elected officials, community leaders, and cooperating organizations are strongly recommended.

## Related Strategic Initiative (optional)

Describe how the project:

- provides physical connections among resources; includes an NPS area as an actively involved project partner;
- includes both natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation;
- partners with a health organization.

## RTCA Program Vision

A network of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces that promotes quality of life and links people to their natural and cultural heritage

## RTCA Program Mission

The National Park Service (NPS) preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. The NPS cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world.

The Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program implements the natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation mission of the National Park Service in communities across America.

## RTCA Strategic Plan Goals

1. RTCA will help create local, regional and state networks of parks, rivers, trails, greenways and open spaces by collaborating with community partners and National Park areas in every state.
2. RTCA will hold itself and project partners accountable through measures that demonstrate success and maximize the impact of program financial and human resources.
3. RTCA will be recognized and sought out as the community assistance arm of the National Park Service for conservation and outdoor recreation.



**National Park Service**  
U.S. Department of the Interior

## Contact Information:

Chris Abbett, Program Leader  
NPS RTCA Program,  
Atlanta Federal Center, 1924 Bldg. 100  
Alabama Street, S.W.  
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Phone: (404) 562-3175

Email: [chris\\_abbett@nps.gov](mailto:chris_abbett@nps.gov)

Website: [www.nps.gov/rtca](http://www.nps.gov/rtca)

*The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.*

*The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the country and the world. Mission of the National Park Service, 1997.*

## Other National Park Service Assistance Programs

Besides providing technical assistance through the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program, the National Park Service gives targeted help in a number of related areas through the following programs:

- **Hydropower Recreation Assistance** - Provides technical assistance on recreation access and facilities, instream flows for recreation, and riparian corridor protection to all participants in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) hydropower licensing and relicensing proceedings. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/hydro](http://www.nps.gov/hydro).
- **Land and Water Conservation Fund** - Provides 50% matching grants to States and local governments for the acquisition and development of public outdoor recreation areas and facilities. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/lwcf](http://www.nps.gov/lwcf).
- **Federal Lands to Parks** - Helps State and local agencies acquire, at no cost, surplus Federal land and facilities for parks and recreation. For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/flp](http://www.nps.gov/flp).
- **National Heritage Areas** - Provides assistance to National Heritage Areas designated by Congress. For more information, visit [www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/](http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/).
- **Rivers and Trails Studies** - Undertaken by NPS when authorized by Congress for potential additions to the Wild & Scenic Rivers System or National Trails System. For more information, visit <http://planning.nps.gov>.
- **Historic Preservation** - There are a variety of National Park Service programs offering assistance for a range of resources including archeological sites, battlefields, and historic landscapes. Some of these programs offer direct assistance to the public, others work through State Historic Preservation Offices. For more information, visit [www.cr.nps.gov](http://www.cr.nps.gov).
- **Challenge Cost Share** - A 50:50 matching grant program to support National Park Service units and programs through partner support. For more information, visit <http://www.nps.gov/ccsp>.